



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
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DOC PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 14 INMATE-ON-INMATE HOSTAGE SITUATION AT HOWARD R. YOUNG CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

Department of Correction Commissioner Carl Danberg held a press conference Thursday in front of the Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI) in Wilmington to discuss details of the Wednesday, May 14 inmate-on-inmate hostage situation at the facility.

During his briefing, Commissioner Danberg outlined the background and details of the event, which are below:

The incident occurred in Pod 1 E, a Disciplinary Housing Unit in the West side of the building, and took place while the facility was operating under normal staffing conditions. Sye Newton, the hostage taker, had been moved to that unit on May 11, 2008 for disorderly/threatening behavior. The victim, who is not being identified, was moved to the unit on April 28, 2008 pending a disciplinary hearing. There were also 32 additional inmates in the unit, for a total of 34.

Inmates in Pod 1 E are allowed out of their cells on a rotating basis for one hour of recreation and matters of personal hygiene, and it was during one of these periods of time that the hostage situation developed.

Eight inmates were utilizing their recreation/hygiene time when, around 11:50 a.m., Newton, 22 (DOB 10/11/1985), assaulted a fellow inmate, overcoming him with a single blow to the head. The victim was then dragged into Newton's cell.

A Correctional Officer immediately called central control and the institution was placed on lock-down at 11:56 a.m.

A phone was provided to Newton so communication could be established, and over the next five hours a series of negotiators spoke with the hostage taker and, on at least one occasion, spoke with the victim.

During the time negotiations were ongoing, a tactical team was moved into place. It was determined that tactical force could be used to conclude the situation without significant risk to the victim or staff. At approximately 4:50 p.m. a decision was made to use that force should a final-effort negotiation fail.

At 5:17 p.m. the Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT) moved into the area and deployed a flash-bang device to stun Newton, and he was promptly secured. The victim was removed from the cell and approximately two minutes later Newton was removed. Both individuals were evaluated by medical staff.

Newton was uninjured and transferred that evening to Delaware Correctional Center in Smyrna. He is now housed in the Security Housing Unit of that facility – Delaware's Super Max unit. Delaware State Police have obtained warrants charging Newton with Kidnapping 1st degree, Assault in a Detention Facility, and Possession of a Deadly Weapon During the Commission of a Felony.

The victim received a laceration to his shoulder early in the crisis and required three stitches. He was otherwise unharmed.

A razor has been recovered from the cell and has been bagged as evidence. Newton apparently took the razor, which was issued to him at 11:30 that morning, broke the blade free from the handle and used a comb as a holder for the blade. By Standard Operating Procedure during recreation/hygiene time, one razor is issued to each inmate and collected back from the offender within 30 minutes.

Although the investigation into the incident is on-going, at this time it does not appear to have been caused by Officer complacency or any violation of Department Policy.

The investigation is expected to continue for at least one month.

QUOTES FROM COMMISSIONER DANBERG

"I wish to thank the staff at Howard R. Young who responded quickly, efficiently and professionally in this emergency. Warden Phil Morgan and his staff worked throughout the afternoon to bring this matter to a close in a safe manner."

"The CERT program, headed up by Warden Dave Hall, handled their roles admirably. These individuals, who are all volunteers, receive special training throughout the year and they responded like the true professionals they are."